



STATE OF VERMONT  
Department of Education  
120 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

**VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Montpelier Room, Capitol Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, 100 State Street,**  
**Montpelier**  
**February 17, 2009**

*The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.*

**Approved Minutes – February 17, 2009**

The current month's meeting agenda and packet materials may be accessed electronically at:  
<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#packet>

**Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Brian Vachon; Kathy Larsen; Chris Robbins; Tess Savage; Susan Schill; Bill Corrow; Fayneese Miller (10:16 a.m.)**

**DOE: Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Bill Romond; Jill Remick; Tina Muncy; Dave White; Maureen Start; Greg Glennon; Mark Oettinger**

**Others: Sherry Gile, VT-NEA; Daniel Mickelson, ACT; Dwight Davis, VISA; Jim White, ACT; Kalee Roberts, VSBA, Hyde Park Elementary; Mike Bartini, College Board; Brian Petraitis, College Board**

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**Preliminaries**

**Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance**

Tom James, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item B: Roll Call and Introductions**

Chair James and Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

**Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates**

Chair James noted the upcoming NASBE legislative conference in Washington D.C, March 12-13, 2009; participation by interested Board members is encouraged. The registration cutoff date is February 20, 2009. Carol King has more details.

Susan Schill suggested switching Items I and J to better accommodate the audience member who came to participate, considering Item I would go into executive session.

**Item D: January Monthly Report**

Chair Tom James reminded the group that this report comes out on a monthly basis and is available online. It conveys the major pieces of actions the Board has taken and shares information of the happenings at the department as well. For January, the entire report addressed the FY 2010 budget; James encouraged everyone to view this on their local public access channel.

**Item E: Public to be Heard**

Kalee Roberts, VSBA board member and Hyde Park Elementary and LUHS#18 board member, introduced herself. She questioned which statutes could be suspended in the next week to help school boards comply with the Governor's decision to level fund education spending. Vilaseca shared that the department is trying to find ways to alleviate requirements. He has met with the Vermont Superintendents Association and Vermont School Boards Association on this topic.

Per Roberts, there has been a week to address this and budgets are completely statutory. She questioned how the public could understand the complexity and be prepared to vote on this in the next week. She stated that instead of looking at what statutes could be suspended, a gauntlet was put on the floor and they are now expected to comply.

Robbins offered that what is being talked about is reducing costs; but, there are no statutes involved in reducing staff and that schools might need to reduce staff as the department is being asked to do.

**Item F: Commissioner's Update (Armando Vilaseca)**

Vilaseca shared that it has been a challenging few weeks and that Friday will be the end of his first month. He confirmed that all had received a copy of the Op-Ed piece he wrote on Transformation and spoke of the presentation he would do Thursday for the Joint House and Senate Education Committees. He met with Angelo Dorta and VTNEA as well. He stated current budget issues should not divert us from the long-term goals. Romond and his committee are looking at how the initiative is transforming not just schools but the department as well. Vilaseca gave credit to Jill Remick for coining the phrase, "Transformation is not a destination, but a journey." Transformation is Vilaseca's number one priority, with many, many number two priorities.

Chair James has organized a group called the E7, which includes representation from the VSA, VPA, VSBA, himself, Commissioner Vilaseca, and members of the Administration to discuss the questions of how we can provide some education cost relief to the schools, while continuing to provide quality education.

Vilaseca confirmed that all had received a copy of the FY10 budget book, and acknowledged that this was put together by many people and helped him to understand who does what and how many people are funded through the General Fund and other funds. The department is struggling, like many, with what the immediate future will bring. Originally, the department was given a target number of 33 positions to cut; now it is \$1.3 million in labor costs – which comes down to staff. Vilaseca's goal is to not cut any position providing direct assistance to the field, because it would be disingenuous on his part to take away support from schools.

Vilaseca reported on his recent visit to Missisquoi Valley Union High School and was very impressed with what he saw. The building is clean, the students are engaged and good

relationships are evident. MVU administrators told Vilaseca that they need the department to continue to support and help the school.

**Item G: Legislative Update** (Armando Vilaseca, Mark Oettinger)

Vilaseca explained the department's process to address legislative work. In the past, there was one person assigned to tracking bills; at this time, Cindy Lee is the point person for bill tracking and an additional person is assigned to each bill for in-depth coverage. Vilaseca, Talbott and the leadership team are aware of what is going on in the Legislature. All phone contact is also being documented.

Oettinger said that the House and Senate bills total about 60 in number. Some have a lot to do with education; others not so much. The 23-point plan expanded in the fall to a 34-Point plan, in response to the Bennett tragedy, to trigger mechanisms in the system to reduce the sexual predation of young people. If passed by the Senate, it would strengthen the teacher licensure process. There would be expanded criminal records checks, to include a sex offender registry check on teachers and staff. It will also increase the burden on districts. The department has given input on pieces that affect education; some have been adopted through amendments. The bill is now in the House, and needs to go to both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Some of the remaining questions include: 1) are the proposed burdens that are being presented in the best interest of students and a good allocation of resources; 2) should criminal checks and registry checks be required every time there is re-licensure; 3) inclusion of volunteers in schools, chaperones at school dances, drivers is contemplated.

Oettinger also updated the Board re bills on the following topics: harassment; independent school designation; state placed students; the Community High School of Vermont; teen parenting; binding arbitration for teacher contracts; alternative methods of obtaining a high school diploma; supervisory union consolidation; and Act 82 of 2007

Larsen thanked Oettinger and said she found his overview very helpful. She is also pleased with the new bill tracking process. Chair James is interested in more information on alternative programs.

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**Action Items**

**Item H\*\*** Consent Agenda

**Document(s):** Consent Agenda Items

**Motion:** Vachon moved, Robbins seconded, that the consent agenda be accepted with comments. Robbins would like his e-mail address corrected, as he didn't receive the first few e-mails regarding the Policy Commission. Larsen noted that under H4, they would be approving Retta Dunlap and Teri Geney as representatives to the policy commission and Lisa Ventriss as business representative.

**Consent Agenda**

- 1. Minutes of January 20, 2009 SBE Meeting**
- 2. Minutes of January 23, 2009 Special SBE Meeting**
- 3. Independent School Approval**  
Renewal of general independent school approval:

St. Paul Catholic School, Barton, VT; grades K-8

Renewal of general and special education independent school approval:

East Valley Academy, East Randolph, VT; grades 5-11

**4. Appointments: Education Transformation Policy Commission (Bill Romond)**

The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

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**Motion:** Schill moved, Robbins seconded, that Item J be moved ahead of Item I. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

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**Discussion Items**

**Item J: Friedman Foundation Survey on School Choice**

**Document(s):** Discuss Topic Cover

Discussion: Paul DiPerna (Freidman Foundation for Education Choice director of partner services) and Retta Dunlap (Executive Director of Vermonters for Better Education) introduced themselves. Chair James explained that in August, Robbins asked the Board to give consideration to this survey and the Board agreed to consider being a sponsor of this survey. The purpose of this item is to understand the decision not to have the Board listed as a survey sponsor.

Dunlap shared that the sponsorship is not as important as the discussion. Robbins said that he had recently learned that there were additional requests required beyond the sponsorship. DiPerna said he sees sponsorships as a way of building relationships with the states and to get state-specific questions; the sponsorship does not require financial obligation. Chair James questioned that nothing else was requested/required and suggested there was a possible misunderstanding. Dunlap said other information might have been suggested but is not required, and further suggested that there might have been some miscommunication on her part. Per Chair James, based on the fact that the Board had not agreed to the other pieces the decision was made not to be a sponsor.

Vachon questioned that if the information has been released, what value does our sponsorship have at this point? Dunlap said there was no value, but having the poll and its information explained does have value. This survey is a snapshot – it asks questions regarding views, opinions, familiarity, awareness, school funding and school choice. Fayneese Miller questioned the survey size of 1,200 and the methodology used. It was clarified that the sample of 1200 consisted of those who completed the interview and did not include those who did not complete it. “Likely voter” was the defined population. Miller asked if it was only people that had access to a telephone that were included and if others were excluded. She questioned the reliability indicators. DiPerna said that reliability indicators could be provided and that they followed the guidelines set by the American Association of Public Information. Miller suggested that more information be provided to the Board, if buy-in was desired and commented that 1200 people is a small sample size. DiPerna said the sample design and response rate is such that there is confidence in the results. Robbins questioned Miller as to whether the survey should be discredited. Miller said absolutely not.

Chair James said the Board should be able to take advantage of the information provided to better understand the issue of school choice. He also apologized for the potential misunderstanding and if there was a decision made in error. Schill questioned why Chair James

made that decision on behalf of the Board, without a phone conference. Chair James responded that he could have, but that he didn't. Vilaseca said he supported and concurred with the decision to not offer sponsorship and stated further that he is hesitant to have the DOE sponsor or endorse outside surveys. He believes the field would not see this as supportive of public education. Robbins asked if Vilaseca did not believe the results, or did not want to believe the results. Vilaseca cited some questions in the survey that do not necessarily address Vermont issues. He also said that he has some questions on the methodology used. Vilaseca offered that he and General Counsel Mark Oettinger would return next month with a draft policy for the Board that it will not sponsor or vote on support of surveys unless the Board or DOE initiates the survey or it is a state or federal requirement.

**Motion:** Robbins moved, Schill seconded, that Board accept the survey as a legitimate reflection on Vermonter's opinion of K-12 education and school choice. Vachon noted that he does not think that this poll should be discredited because he takes polls with a grain of salt and thinks there is a lot of food for thought, especially as we move towards transformation. This survey shows that public education is not very well-received. Miller questioned, "Not well-received by whom?" She questioned how many of those polled actually had school-aged children? (The answer is 87 percent and can be provided.) And, how reliable are the questions that were asked? She reiterated that she was not implying that it is not a good survey, but as a quantitative psychologist, she needs to know the reliability. Vilaseca indicated that he, too, is not questioning the value of the survey – just questioning that some of the questions might have been leading. In Vilaseca's opinion, this does not promote public education. Per Dunlap, there was a statistic that people saw the public schools in a positive light and thought they were good, but they want more choice. She reminded the Board that they are not just about public schools, but also private and independent schools – and that they are about public education and tax dollars and also about the alternatives. The motion failed (3-5) (In Favor: Schill, Corrow, Robbins; Opposed: James, Vachon, Savage, Miller, Larsen).

Chair James suggested that an effort be made to use the information provided. Dunlap strongly encouraged the Commissioner craft a policy so that her organization (and others) does not end up in this situation again. She reports that there was no feedback from the Board regarding questions asked, although it was requested in plenty of time.

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### **Action Items (continued)**

**Item I: Tuition Appeal: Ratification of Hearing Officer Decision** (Mark Oettinger, Greg Glennon, Kathy Larsen)  
**Document(s):** Confidential

**Motion:** At 11:00 a.m., Larsen moved, Schill seconded, that the Board enter executive session, requesting Mark Oettinger and Greg Glennon to remain. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

The meeting resumed at 11:40 a.m.

**Motion:** Miller moved, seconded by Larsen, that the Board accept the recommended actions described in TU08-03. The motion passed 5-3 (In favor: James, Vachon, Savage, Larsen, Miller; Opposed: Robbins, Schill and Corrow).

Remick suggested that the Board address Item N - Future Agendas, to make the best use of time and accommodate those present.

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**Item N: Future Agendas** (Board members, Armando Vilaseca)

**Document(s):** Item N – Building 08-09

**Discussion:**

March Agenda: Election of Officers. Chair James noted that he would be interested in continuing to serve as Chair, and Stokes has indicated that she is interested in continuing to serve in the capacity of Vice Chair.

Milken Awards: The Board and department are not hosting a teacher recognition dinner this year. The Milken educator has been invited to come to the Board meeting so that she can be recognized. Chair James brought up Student Recognition. Miller strongly feels that we should continue to recognize students. This is now on for the April agenda.

Strategic Plan: The five-year plan is up for review this year; this discussion needs to be started in the near future.

Board membership: There will be three new Board members beginning in March.

Consent Agenda: Rivendell Interstate School District has requested approval of an amendment to its Articles of Agreement (re Australian Ballot).

Survey Policy: Oettinger and Vilaseca will draft a policy for surveys/polls for discussion at the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Future Agendas: Miller would like to add teacher education programs at the higher education level, especially as it relates to the Professional Standards Board, for May or June agenda.

Larsen suggested a brief Policy Commission Update every month.

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**Lunch and Recognition**

Chair James recessed for lunch at 11:50a.m. Lunch included a recognition ceremony for outgoing Board members Susan Schill, Bill Corrow and Chris Robbins.

At 12:57 PM, Chair James called the meeting back to order.

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		<b>Transformation of Education</b>	
1:10 p.m.	<b>K</b>	Department of Education/Department of Labor/Workforce Development Council Collaboration	<b>DISCUSS</b>
		David White; Pat Moulton Powden; John O’Kane; Chip Evans	

John O’Kane introduced himself; the Work Force Development Council (WFDC) is charged with promoting jobs for Vermonters. He noted his pleasure with the Transformation initiative and with the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. He believes that this starts with career readiness programs for middle school kids, support for enrollment, smoother transitions between

traditional education and technical education, adult education, etc. WFDC has looked at these programs and have found that there are some “islands of excellence”. We are dealing with relatively small amounts of money - \$8 million – much of which is scholarships. He noted that he didn’t see in the Transformation plan any mention of student’s choice in their education.

Commissioner Powden was delighted with the use of “islands of excellence” – she has been using “random acts of excellence.” She questioned, “How do we turn this into something systematic? How do we help these kids to understand that there will be work for them here in Vermont after they have explored the world outside of Vermont?” Next Generation dollars are a tool that facilitates the Transformation vision. There will always be a need to retool adults, but if we start with a strong foundation and experience of what the working world might be, that would be most beneficial. Vachon interjected that if it wasn’t expressed in the Transformation document that there is a strong desire to have students have a strong voice in their future, then we need to revisit this as it was definitely in the forefront of everyone’s minds as they prepared the document. Chair James added that “student-centered learning” is the first thing addressed in the document and that “flexible learning environments” is the second issue addressed.

White offered that, looking at Transformation through the lens of someone from DOE, he is very excited about the beginning of a partnership between the two departments. Early intervention is key, helping students to envision what they might want to have for a career, as early as middle school. Powden shared that seeing community-based learning, internships, etc., as meaningful is very important. Transformation really means the building of community. The idea of industry and education centers of excellence is to partner with agencies across the state to address the skills and understanding needed by students to succeed in the work world, as viewed by the industry. And then to bring these ideas together with education folks to begin to develop curriculum and collaboration and ensure that there are viable employment opportunities for them in Vermont and that students are equipped to pursue these opportunities. Lastly, developing those opportunities, such as internships and mentoring enable flexible learning environments. Apprenticeship models are commonly used in the DOL and are successful. Miller hopes that we move beyond the technical apprenticeship models – and put them in a role of having the opportunity to show their critical thinking skills. She believes that we need people that can look at a problem and think about why it isn’t working properly. We have the opportunity for partnerships through DOL and DOE and it is that collaboration that is important. How can we make the connections real so that they last beyond the funding? Savage offered that even with all these opportunities, it is still hard to know what you might want to do. She has done a lot of work trying to figure this out and still has no idea what career path she might choose. Powden shared that it doesn’t have to be a one shot deal in order to be a learning experience. The point is expanding your experience.

O’Kane thanked the group for their time and expressed that he hopes to come back, probably through Dave White to talk more about these “islands of excellence.”

Chair James said that the Board has the opportunity to meet in various schools throughout Vermont and in each one there is that energy and excitement that anything is possible. He commented that he doesn’t know how anyone could not be excited about this concept.

Powden said the DOL is inventorying their islands of excellence and trying to learn from experience. Powden distributed the mid-year summary report from Act 46/Next Generation Programs FY 2009.

### **Discussion Items (continued)**

#### **Item L: Fall 2008 Student Performance Results (Armando Vilaseca; Michael Hock)**

**Document(s):** Discuss Topic Cover

**Discussion:** The slide show presentation was included in the agenda packets. Vilaseca noted that any increase is significant because 50,000 students are being assessed. Math is a concern as scores are lagging behind. Primary and elementary students outperform high school students. There is also the question of relevancy: what is it that will give a student motivation to perform his/her best on these assessments? Some schools are including NECAP scores on student transcripts. Former Commissioner Cate is assembling some faculty at UVM to consider looking at NECAP scores for admissions. CCV is also considering this. Vilaseca has met with Karrin Wilks regarding how to make the assessments meaningful.

Some of the questions discussed included: What is happening in the classroom at this level – how is math taught? What kinds of reinforcers are there? Are the schools teaching what is in the Vermont standards? What is a test like this designed to do, and are high school teachers equipped to teach in this manner? In the schools that have shown improvement, Integrated Math is taught so that students get some algebra and geometry every year. There is some institutional resistance, as well. Savage thinks that the decline in NECAP scores during junior year is because that is a heavy-testing year and that even high-achieving students get burned out on testing. NECAP is designed around the assumption that students have had Algebra I and Geometry because those are the grade expectations.

Five year statistics show more kids meeting the standards and less students in the lower quartile; the same goes for math and writing, scores are higher today than they were when NECAP started. Both free and reduced lunch students and non-free and reduced lunch students are making slow but steady progress toward proficiency. Boys still fall behind girls.

Trends are positive and some gaps are closing. At the high school level, there are only two years of data, but trends are up. One area of concern is why more AP students aren't meeting the standard with proficiency. AP results of Vermont students compared very favorably with national results – there are more students taking AP classes and more students scoring 3 or above on the AP exams. Corrow questioned the results from NH, RI and ME. Hock explained that they agreed not to compare at the beginning of the project because demographics are so different, but typically NH and VT are comparable. RI is behind although making gains.

Per Hock, four areas were identified to improve results: Aligning curriculum, data-based decision making, professional development, and pre-test preparation. Schools that made significant gains talked about the test with students prior to taking it and explained the significance, processed it with them after taking the test and asked how it could have been improved, and gave the test in smaller classrooms.

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#### **Item M: Growth Model Approach to NCLBA Accountability (Michael Hock)**

**Document(s):** Discuss Topic Cover Sheet

**Discussion:** Hock provided background on the topic. Growth Models are not how you assess students, but what you do with the results, versus a Status Model which would be used to compare last year's results to this year's results. Under a Status Model, every student becomes proficient. Under a growth model – how many become proficient doesn't matter as much as that



every student shows improvement. The core principle behind NCLB is that by 2013-2014 every child will be proficient.

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**Adjourn:** At 2:51 p.m., Robbins moved, Schill seconded, to adjourn the February 17, 2009 State Board of Education meeting. The motion was approved unanimously (8-0).

Minutes recorded by Maureen Start  
Minutes prepared by Carol King